

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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INTERIOR STEPS UP ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS PROTECTING WILDLIFE SPECIES, MORTON SAYS

The Department of the Interior is stepping up its enforcement of laws protecting big game and other species of wildlife, Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton said Monday.

"Let me put it on the line -- we will pursue maximum criminal action against the unethical hunter who violates State and Federal game laws, maligning the reputation of hunting in general," he said in a speech to the Outdoor Writers of America in convention at Mazatlan, Mexico.

"We are approaching a time when the environmental movement is beginning to backlash against the hunter and fisherman," he said. "This wave of anti-hunting sentiment is tragic because we are all working for the same thing: preservation of wildlife habitat and our natural resources."

Morton noted that a bill may soon be signed into law creating a South San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge. If and when it becomes law, it will be the first time money has been used from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to create a national wildlife refuge, the Secretary said.

But more than this is needed, he added -- citing President Nixon's initiative for a National Land Use Policy Act using Federal grants to motivate better Statewide and regionwide land use planning.

Local governments alone simply cannot do this job, he said, if the nation is to "ensure the preservation of vital non-economic values" in land use planning. The President's bill would "provide a mechanism for continued economic progress that preserves our ecological, cultural, and historic values," Morton said.

"We must have a land planning system which regards the environment as a whole system -- and not a parcel of lots, subdivisions, zoning codes, and isolated construction sites -- a system that ensures that the critical decisions affecting the balance of development and preservation at the local level, not be at an environmental or human cost."

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